

Protecting Your Working Teen

A Guide for Parents

2007

Work is a valuable experience for many teenagers. It can give them needed money, skills, and self-confidence. At the same time, working teens also face risks, even in places that seem safe. Teens are more likely than adults to get hurt at work.

Every year, more than 160,000 U.S. teens are injured at work, and many are killed. Injuries at work should not be considered “part of the job.” Most injuries can and should be prevented. Employers, young workers, and parents all have roles to play in ensuring that work is a positive, safe experience.

Steps you can take to help your teen stay safe at work:

1. Know the child labor laws and make sure your teen knows them (see reverse).

2. Talk with your teen about his or her job.

Ask your teen about:

- ◆ Tasks - what your teen is asked to do.
- ◆ Training - whether your teen has been trained to do assigned tasks safely.
- ◆ The workplace itself - if there are hazards like slippery floors or machines without safety guards.
- ◆ The supervisor - where the supervisor is while your teen is working, how receptive he or she is to listening to employees' concerns.
- ◆ Safety equipment - if your teen is provided with goggles, gloves, special shoes, or other safety equipment.

3. Set limits on hours.

Studies have shown that teens who work more than 20 hours a week do not do as well in school as those who work fewer hours.

Teachers report that teens who work late at night are less alert in class and less prepared.

4. Help your teen talk about his or her concerns.

Encourage your teen to answer the following questions:

What do you want your supervisor to do or change?

Examples:

“I only want to work 3 hours on school days.”

“I want help lifting heavy boxes.”

Why do you want your supervisor to make this change?

Examples:

“So I can keep up with my schoolwork.”

“So I won't get hurt.”

Whose help do you want?

Examples:

“I'd feel more comfortable approaching the boss with some of my coworkers.”

“I'd like my parents to come with me when I meet with the boss.”

How will you talk to your supervisor about this?

Examples:

“Can I make an appointment to talk with you about a problem I'm having?”

“Lifting boxes is hurting my back, and I'd like to work out another way to get the job done.”

Contact any of the agencies listed below if you need additional help:

MA Office of the Attorney General (enforces state child labor laws).....	(617) 727-3465
US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (enforces federal child labor laws).....	(617) 624-6700
MA Division of Occupational Safety (oversees the work permit process).....	(617) 626-6952
MA Department of Industrial Accidents (oversees the workers' compensation system).....	(800) 323-3249 x470
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (regulates workplace health and safety).....	(800) 321-6742

For more information, contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health *Teens at Work Project* at (617) 624-5632 or teens.atwork@state.ma.us. You can also visit our website at www.mass.gov/dph/teensatwork.



The Child Labor Laws in Massachusetts

Child labor laws exist to protect teenagers in the workplace. They limit the number of hours teens are legally able to work. The legal work hours for minors are:

14 & 15 Year-Olds

- ◆ Only between 7 am and 7 pm (9 pm during summer)
- ◆ Not during school hours
- ◆ Maximum of 18 hours per week (40 during school vacation), 3 hours a day (8 hours on weekends and during school vacation), and 6 days per week

Persons UNDER 14 may NOT WORK!

There are a few exceptions to this, such as babysitting, working as news carriers, on farms, and in entertainment (with a special permit).

16 & 17 Year-Olds

- ◆ Only between 6 am and 10 pm on nights preceding a regularly scheduled school day
- ◆ If the establishment stops serving customers at 10 pm, the minor may be employed until 10:15 pm
- ◆ Only between 6 am and 11:30 pm on nights *not* preceding a regularly scheduled school day, except in restaurants and race tracks until midnight
- ◆ Maximum of 48 hours per week, 9 hours per day, and 6 days per week

After 8 pm, all minors must be directly supervised by an adult who is located in the workplace and who is reasonably accessible.

(With the exception of minors who work at kiosks in the common areas of some malls.)

Child labor laws also protect teens' health and safety by prohibiting them from working in hazardous jobs or doing dangerous tasks. The following is a list of *some* of these tasks:

Persons under 16 years-old may NOT:

- Cook (except on electric or gas grills that do not have open flames)
- Operate fryolators, rotisseries, NEICO broilers, or pressure cookers
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven food slicers, grinders or choppers
- Perform any baking activities
- Operate microwave ovens (except to heat food in microwave ovens with a maximum capacity of 140 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Clean kitchen surfaces that are hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Filter, transport, or dispose of cooking oil or grease hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Work in freezers or meat coolers
- Operate power-driven machinery (except office machines or machines in retail or food service not otherwise prohibited)
- Work in a manufacturing facility (e.g., a factory)
- Work on ladders or scaffolds
- Work in amusement places (e.g., pool or billiard room, or bowling alley)
- Work doing laundry in a commercial laundry or dry cleaning establishment
- Work with dangerous electrical machinery or appliances
- Work that is determined by the Massachusetts Attorney General to be dangerous to the health and well-being of minors
- **Work in any of the occupations or tasks prohibited for persons under age 18**

Persons under 18 years-old may NOT:

- Drive a vehicle or forklift (except golf carts in certain circumstances)
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven meat slicers, grinders or choppers
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven bakery machines
- Work 30 feet or more above ground or water
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages
- Use circular or band saws, or guillotine shears
- Use power-driven woodworking machines
- Use hoisting machines
- Operate paper balers, paper box compactors, or other power-driven paper products machines
- Work slaughtering, packing, or processing meat
- Work in railway operations
- Work in roofing or on or about a roof
- Work in foundries or around blast furnaces
- Work where they are exposed to radioactive substances
- Oil or clean hazardous machinery in motion
- Work in any job requiring the possession or use of a firearm

Work Permits

All teens under 18 must get a **Work Permit** from the school district where they live or go to school. For more information, visit the website of the Division of Occupational Safety (www.mass.gov/dos/youth).

Workers' Compensation

If your child is injured at work, they may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. Contact the Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents at 800-323-3249 x470, or www.mass.gov/dia, for more information.